

## **Fire Dependent Ecosystem Restoration (FDER) Project Scoping-Questions and Answers**

### **Q: What is the FDER Landscape Project?**

The FDER Landscape Project is a landscape scale vegetation management project using a condition based management approach. The FDER project area is located completely within the Leech Lake Band of the Ojibwe reservation boundary. Implementation would occur over a 15 year time period. Activities during implementation are limited to vegetation treatments such as timber harvest, site preparation, prescribed burning, planting, and other vegetation treatments. Temporary road management would also occur. The proposed action contains:

- o a range of treatments that could be applied to certain forest conditions
- o a limit on acres that may be treated by the project
- o landscape filters and operational standards and guidelines which address meeting the purpose and need or avoiding and minimizing adverse environmental effects
- o implementation plan which includes public, tribal, and other governments involvement.

These project components are commitments that shape the selection of stands and treatments during implementation and inform effects analysis in the NEPA document.

### **Q: What is condition based management?**

Condition based management is a planning and implementation method which allows for selecting treatments that respond to current resource conditions. It is a flexible toolbox to put the right treatment on the right acre at the right time. For the FDER Project, the selection of specific stands and treatments would be done during implementation based on current resource conditions. The selection of stands and treatments during implementation would be done in accordance with the FDER project proposed action.

### **Q: Why is the FDER Landscape Project changing from our traditional planning process and how is condition based management different from what is done traditionally?**

Traditional vegetation management planning processes on the Chippewa National Forest include selection of a list of stands to treat during the NEPA process and a decision on relatively small project areas (e.g. 1/6 of a District). This approach contains several drawbacks such as:

- Implementation sometimes does not match planning assumptions due to changing conditions on the ground. A substantial portion of planning efforts are never realized on the ground.
- This approach limits the ability to put the right treatment on the right acre at the right time across the landscape.
- This approach limits the ability to collaborate on treatments with other land managers or interested organizations.

- Not enough staff time and resources are spent on public engagement, treatment design, inventory and monitoring on the ground.

These issues are contributing to the reality that the Forest is not keeping pace with the needs identified in the Monitoring and Evaluation Report to meet Forest Plan vegetation management objectives and desired conditions. Therefore, a different planning approach is needed to address challenges and opportunities presented by forest conditions compared to Forest Plan objectives. Condition based management is different than the traditional planning approach in that it allows for more flexibility to select treatments and stands to treat across the landscape during implementation.

**Q: When and how will people be able to engage on projects and treatment activities?**

People will have ongoing opportunities to be involved in the FDER Landscape Project:

- o Opportunities to comment during the NEPA process.
- o Public, tribal and other government involvement continues throughout the implementation process when there will be an opportunity to comment on a list of stands proposed for treatment. The Implementation Plan makes specific commitments for collaboration and public, tribal and other government involvement.

**Q: Where is the list of stands proposed for treatment?**

The list of stands is developed, shared, and discussed in the implementation process. The implementation plan shows specific points in the implementation process where and how CNF engages with the tribal government, state and local government, other organizations, and the public.

**Q: If there is no list of stands proposed for treatment, how do I submit scoping comments?**

We are looking for any issues, concerns or suggestions you may have regarding the project. During the NEPA process, we may modify the proposed action or consider alternatives to the proposed action informed by your comments. Here are some questions to consider when you submit scoping comments:

- o What forest conditions need to be improved in the FDER project area?
- o What treatment types should be included in the treatment 'toolbox' and under what conditions should they be used?
- o Are there any project design criteria ( operational standards and guidelines) that should be added, changed or removed from the project to better achieve the purpose and need, or to avoid and minimize adverse environmental effects including to any specific resources or locations?
- o How can the implementation plan be designed to best engage other governments, interested organizations and the public in selecting stands and treatments?

**Q: Will management occur within or adjacent to an area I am concerned about?**

Limited timber harvest and other vegetation management tools are in the 'flexible toolbox' that may be used during implementation. However, the project includes design elements and operational standards and guidelines that contain requirements and considerations on where,

when and how to treat stands. We are looking for any comments you have on these project design criteria. In addition, during the implementation phase of the FDER Landscape Project, the public, tribes and other governments will be engaged on a list of stands proposed for treatment and the Responsible Official will consider input or concerns.